

PENNSYLVANIA NATIVE Tommy Sanders worked for some of sprint car racing's greatest drivers during his time as a lead mechanic and car builder and he is joining a lot of those same drivers in the National Sprint Car Hall of Fame in Knoxville, Iowa.

Sanders was originally from Hanover, Pennsylvania, and started out as a mechanic for the Ken Appler Racing Team, which consisted of two cars - one driven by Gene Goodling and the other by Sanders' uncle Willie Musselman.

During his time working on the Appler cars, the operation won the Lincoln Speedway track championship with Goodling in 1962 and 1963. Goodling also captured championships at Susquehanna Speedway in 1962 and 1964. Goodling gained a single championship at Williams Grove Speedway in 1964.

Sanders' career really took off when he teamed up with Bobby Allen in 1968 and they enjoyed a great run together through 1976 and won an impressive 65 races together. They captured track championships at Lincoln, Susquehanna, and Reading. Sanders worked with Allen to build his first sprint car in 1968. They built winning sprint cars for noted drivers such as Van May, Rick Ferkel, Smokey Snellbaker, Jimmy Edwards, Kenny Slaybaugh, Rod Albright and many more. Working for car owner Harry Fletcher and driver Johnny Grum, the team won nine consecutive features in 1975 and captured a Port Royal Speedway track championship.

After leaving Allen Racing in 1976, Sanders was the mechanic on top

TOMMY SANDERS - MECHANIC

By Todd Heintzelman

contending sprint cars and future Hall of Fame drivers. Driving the Bobby Davis Electric machine, with Sanders turning the wrenches, Sammy Swindell won the 1976-77 Riverside Speedway point titles. Swindell, in 1977, won 14 of 16 races and finished second in the remaining two races. In 1980, driving the Nance Speed Equipment car, Swindell had 16 victories. The following year Swindell drove the Nance car to over 10 wins.

Sanders and Doug Wolfgang were together in 1978 with the famed Speedway Motors Sprint Car. The duo won 18 of 33 races. They finished second to Jimmy Boyd in the first-ever World of Outlaws race. Wolfgang won one of the Devils Bowl preliminary World of Outlaws races. Later, Sanders teamed up with Brad Doty and the Bowers Coal car and they had two All Star Circuit of Champions wins. Doty gained one ASCoC victory in 1982. Doty and Sanders had five Sharon Speedway victories during their two-year span.

Tommy Sanders joined owner Al Hamilton and driver Keith Kauffman for the 1983 and 1984 seasons. Kauffman

won nine features in 1983 with Sanders-tuned cars. During 1984, Kauffman had 22 victories in a span from March through June 1st.

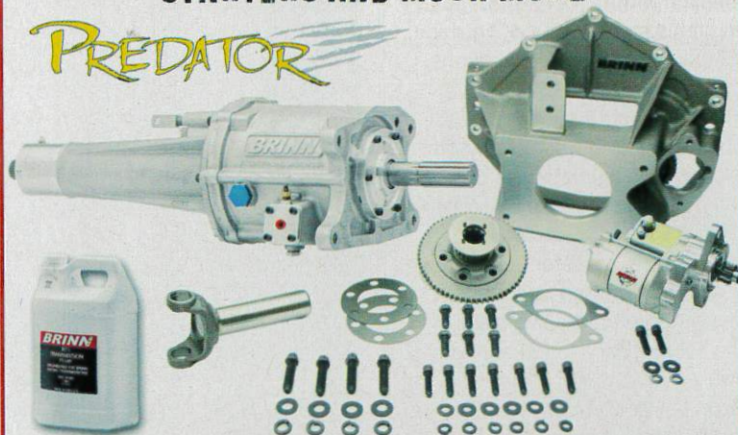
Tommy Sanders has been the lead mechanic on sprint cars that have won at 45 tracks. His major victories have come in the Williams Grove National Open, the Lincoln Speedway State Championship four times, the Western World at Manzanita, the East Bay Nationals, Dirt Cup, Eldora 360 Nationals, Florida State Fair and the Spring and Summer Nationals at Devils Bowl. He also wrenched a second place finish with Jan Opperman in the 1974 Knoxville Nationals after leading 29 laps

Sanders designed and built the 1997 World of Outlaws championship car driven by Sammy Swindell. Sanders was named the 1997 Builder/Manufacturer of the Year. Sanders worked as a Sales Manager for Gambler Competition in Hendersonville, Tennessee. He then advanced to Vice-President until retiring from racing in 2001. In 2002, Sanders began working with the Wirtgen Group and remained there until retiring in 2021. ■

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